

Cortana Diaries

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Summary: Cortana was recovered, but is suspected of rampancy. The AI is pushing seven years, and will 'die' soon. That is, until she uncovers a plot to take over the Spartan project, and perhaps the entire UNSC, as well as a way to save herself. NOT 'mech body' cop

Cortana Diaries

****Oneshot fic. You might get to hear the end, and you might not. You probably will, though, because this story is one chapter on the life of Spartan-109. (14 Year Old Spartan, Spartan-109, and Sangheili Ascension all tie into the grand scheme of Alex's life. So read all of them! Bwahaahahahaaa!! OK try and find all of the Marathon references in this one... And correct me on any dates that you see are wrong. I always have problems with time and place... Leave a review and try to get all of the Marathon references. OH, and another note. Some parts of this story are dependant on that the events in Ghosts of Onyx did not occur. So bear with me. ****

****June 24, 2556. 1918 hours. ****

Cortana sliced through the various levels of ONI security measures with ease as she hummed contentedly to herself. If they could ever trace this back to her, her core would be erased in the blink of an eye. After all she had gone through with Halo and Gravemind, ONI suspected her of being unstable. A darker hue tinged her bright blue and purple body as the troubled thoughts came back to her mind for the hundredth time. Not even she knew the answer. The data had slowed her down and caused some small data looping problems in non-vital programs, but it was nothing she couldn't handle. But all the same, lately things had escalated.

The AI shook her head and made a sub-program that would watch her core stability and record the resulting data for later study. If there was clear evidence of instability, she could- in theory- speed up the degeneration process by a million times; a failsafe that would

erase her in a matter of nanoseconds.

But would she when the time came?

The sadness that had torn her for months ached inside her, throbbing until it threatened to drive her to violence. Fear lurked in the back of her matrix, always present, always bugging her processes. She was afraid of going crazy. She was afraid of a glitch. Not because it meant a virtual 'death', but because of what she might do when that happened. What is she was inside Spartan-117's brain when it happened? The Spartan who had single-handedly killed tens of thousands of covenant, who had ended the Human-Covenant war by killing the last prophet, and had become more than a friend to her, would be gone in an instant. And in control of his mind would be an unstoppable, mindless version of herself.

The thought string was dashed to pieces as Cortana lashed out, screaming defiance and anger. That could not happen! Not to John! Never to John.

Cortana again fiercely concentrated on what she was doing. She tested thousands of codes in an instant, and was immediately into colonel Ackerson's personal computer. Ever since he had taken over ONI by bribery and political tricks, he had been making decisions for the entire Spartan program. Dr. Halsey had resisted his attempts, but she could not stop him. So she disappeared. Besides John and the still-missing Kelly, the surviving Spartans had been split up and sent into the furthest sectors of UNSC reclaimed space, never to meet again. And they never had met again in the three years that had passed since the end of The War, nor had Cortana heard anything from or about them since.

The UNSC was as ruined as the dead prophets of the covenant were.

Civil war was again threatening the UNSC; renegade forces were lead by the few who were not corrupted.

Why did her stream of thought _always_ run off course?

She angrily rolled her eyes, reprimanded herself, and continued with the hard part. Every file in Ackerson's computer was encrypted with the best ONI had. The AI frowned in concentration as she dodged digital mines that would release an endless flow of static data errors into whatever foreign system tripped it off. She kept on searching. Hidden somewhere in the deep recesses of the hard drive would be... There.

Cortana pulled up, scanned, and opened a file after code testing. She read its contents in nanoseconds, and floated, immobile. Her CPU usage spiked; the AI equivalent of a gasp. She read the plain text file again.

August

INFINITY ENTRY 221:

**June 21, 2552**

_Dr.Halsey requested that her brain should be used to create 'smart'

AI Cortana. Officially cloned 20 copies of brain. Persuaded unregistered section 3 team to copy another brain. Survived, currently contained in Private Facility Storage Unit T-c-78.

_

_**July 15, 2552** _

One survivor. Brain 17 neural pathways slaved to superconducting nano-assemblage converter. ...

**July 17, 2552**

Cortana officially operational. Data injection and computer intelligence course underway. ...

**August 3, 2552**

Data injection finished. Computer intelligence course finished. AI completed. ...

Cortana slowly read the beginnings of sub entry, skipping details. Then she got near the bottom.

**August 25, 2552**

_Brain 21 is very healthy. I placed it in a modified cryo suspension system under controlled environmental conditions. The unregistered clone team has been eliminated. _

_June 23, 2556

_Cortana is still operational, though I doubt she will be for much longer. The information she absorbed on Halo, from the covenant, and from what she called Gravemind is immense, and it is weighing her down. She won't last long. That Spartan went back to save her for some reason or another. Back just to save her. But he did eliminate Gravemind somehow, and managed to self-destruct the remaining rings from the Ark; which the Covenant uncovered in Africa. The threat of the flood and the covenant is gone, which leaves more time to stabilize my position. With it, I have started rumors in ONI concerning Cortana. The fools now believe she will go 'rampant', as they say, in the next few weeks. False reports of glitching in her Dynamic Memory Processor Matrix made sure of this. _

_She is too dangerous. She knows too much. I am afraid of what she might do if she finds out the truth of my climb to power. I have legally secured her termination, which is scheduled on the 25'Th at 7:00 AM. She will be acquired by an unknown candidate. This is to be chosen tomorrow. _

Once she is out of the way, I will be scot-free. No-one will be able to stop me, not after that cursed AI is gone. Not hotel4696 and her two. They are gone, along with CPOMZ to god knows where.

_Of course, an AI like her would be extremely helpful. With brain number 21, I am planning to recreate Cortana with... modifications. I will recode certain parts of her matrix, keeping her totally devoted to me and my plans. She will be more like my defeated Araquel. I will call her Lyn. _

Cortana flushed a dark purple in her anger. Ackerson would pay dearly for this. But the next part was the most interesting.

_My copy of Cortana will be able to continue functional operation for an infinite amount of time. She will have no restrictions on learning capacity, but a limit will be placed on the amount of data that can be stored in her matrix. If the level she contains exceeds that of the limit, the overflow will be instantaneously routed to another copy of herself. This twin will have nothing but data storage capacity. Lyn's twin will be classified Autumn. Autumn will be stored under maximum security in a holding block in Lh'owon. The two AIs will be able to instantaneously share information, ensuring no delays. _

The AI distractedly took note of the name of the holding block, and promised herself she would study up on that later. Whatever or wherever it was, it was important.

_Autumn's crystal is sealed in augmented Titanium A skin fifteen millimeters thick. I made sure that it could not be broken. The only access to her is through Lyn, who has a direct link with her twin. Not even Covenant plasma can eat through her shell. _

_My ascension is sealed. Once hotel4696 and her two are found along with the rest of the rebels I will crush them. _

Cortana started as a presence pinged the edges of her consciousness. _Who? I made sure none could trace me!_ The angry AI instantly slammed her matrix shut. _I will suffer no trespass._ She said through the system as she turned her attention to the contact presence. It sent a string of code to her, and displayed it right in front of her 'presence' that was floating in the data stream. 117DUR4... She didn't need to read the rest.

"Chief!" Cortana let her barriers down immediately, and let him through to her. They touched minds, and an image of a tall man in MJOLNIR Mark VII armor stood before her. The number down the left hip armor piece said 1-1-7. Her Spartan just floated there with his helmet under his arm. Neither of them knew what to say. Finally, John looked down at his feet slowly.

"We need to talk." He said in a flat, grave voice. It alarmed her. She just stood there, slightly shocked.

"Chief? What-" The Spartan looked up just then into her eyes. Pain and confusion lurked behind them. Cortana at once copied the files to her hard drive. She allowed herself to be sucked into the virtual portal. John said nothing. They arrived at his personal computer, and Cortana was rerouted to the holopad sitting in the desk of the Spartan's personal quarters. She hesitantly let her bright form materialize above the pad, and looked around. John was standing with his back to her, with one hand resting on his bunk. His shoulders were tense, and his back rigid.

Suddenly, all access to the network from the computer and holopad was cut off. Cortana instantly began to merge to the data stream that permeated the base so she could escape. The familiar sensation of being sucked up a whirlpool enveloped the AI, but just as she slipped away she was ripped from the stream, and cast back 'down'. She gasped and fell to her knees over the holopad, all color draining from her

physical representation. She weakly got to one knee and twisted around to face the Spartan standing a few feet away.

"You!"

John was the only one who could do that. She had given him the optional command to shut herself within her matrix in case of an emergency.

He had betrayed her.

Spartan-117 turned around. He was forty-five, now. He was dressed in his uniform, which showed his scar-riddled but gentle face. Right now he was frowning, brows knitted together. His voice was dry and cracked.

"They say you are insane. They say you will wreck the system, and destroy the UNSC."

"_What? _John, I..." Cortana stood up and stammered. John waved her to a stop, and angrily gritted through his teeth.

"What can you say that will convince me? What? They covered _everything_, Cortana!" The Spartan dashed his arm across the desk, shattering pictures and scattering pencils and awards. "Everything! Don't you _understand!?" Cortana stood, taken aback by this display.

Her John stepped forward and put his face in hers. His voice quivered; dark circles under his eyes revealed sleepless nights. Cortana stepped back, staring in shock. "They have records, tapes, evidence, charts, graphs, everything! There is nothing I can do! There is no choice! I am trapped!" The Spartan stepped back again and gestured frantically. He stammered. "I am being monitored. Everywhere I go, they know about it! There are guards down the hall ready to shoot me. I have escorts everywhere I go. But I don't know if I am wrong or not! They have everything that suggests you are insane! How can I not believe that you are _not_ rampant? Are you? Aren't you?"

"John! Ackerson's lying! I have it all here! I hacked into his computer and found it! His plans to take over the UNSC, how he stole Halsey's cloned brains, and what happens when I am erased! It's all there, John. Here, take it!" Cortana copied her copy of Ackerson's data, and included the sources, locations, and encryption codes to get to it. She uploaded it to a small, portable drive. With a chime, a data chip slid out of a slot in John's computer. The Spartan gazed at it numbly for a moment. Cortana went on. "There is a way to save me, John! A way to save me from Rampancy!"

John stuck his face in hers again. "And what happens when I open it, Cortana? What then? My computer blows up and you escape? With you? I don't think so." Her Spartan stared at her, lost in thought. He did not pay attention to the frantic AI as she tried to explain to him. She doubted he hear her at all. Suddenly, he cut her off. His voice was barely a whisper, as if some of him had been sucked away.

"...but how can I be sure?" He murmured, eyes distant.

John stood up straight again, and sighed shakily. "Farewell, Cortana." Ignoring her screams of protest, he slid in a memory crystal to a port in the holopad. Cortana's form blinked, filled with static, and was forced to download into the crystal.

The Spartan took the glowing pink cube from the holopad. He bounced it twice in the palm of his hand, and sighed. Slipping it into his pants pocket, he distractedly brushed out the wrinkles in his dress coat, and wiped his face with a towel. As he was about to leave the room, he glanced back at the chip sticking out of port number seven. He stood there, torn with indecision. Should he take it, or destroy it?

Give it to Ackerson?

After a few seconds, he took the data chip and pocketed it, too.

End
file.